

Executive Director's Report



Memorandum

Date: December 6, 1999

To: CALFED Policy Group

From: Steven R. Ritchie
Acting Executive Director

Subject: Executive Director's Report

The purpose of this Executive Director's Report is to brief the CALFED Policy Group and BDAC on recent activities and milestones in the CALFED Program. This report focuses on aspects of the Program that are not scheduled for discussion at the BDAC meeting on December 14 or the Policy Group on December 15.

Recent Developments

1. Policy Group Membership

At its November 17th meeting, the Policy Group agreed that the Delta Protection Commission should be included in the CALFED Policy Group. In its capacity as a state agency charged with providing stewardship for the Delta, the Commission will provide an important perspective to CALFED, since so many features of the early CALFED Program include actions that will take place in the Delta over the next seven to ten years.

2. BDAC Membership

Two additional seats have been established on the Bay Delta Advisory Council for individuals representing a cross section of the state's urban and rural environmental justice communities. These new members will serve on BDAC through the signing of the Record of Decision next year. As of this writing, nominations have been submitted to the Secretary of the Interior. It is anticipated that selection of the new members will take place in time for their participation at the December 14th meeting.

Recent Program Activities

1. 2000 Water Operations

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is pursuing two approaches for expending the \$10 million of non-ecosystem monies approved for water acquisitions at the November 1999 Policy Group meeting. First, negotiations are being initiated with entities that have offered to sell south-of-Delta water supplies that can provide immediate benefits in Water Year 2000 and beyond. Second, a Request for Proposal process is being developed to identify other opportunities.

CALFED Agencies

California The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board
Department of Food and Agriculture

Federal Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Geological Survey
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Forest Service
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service
Western Area Power Administration



The Bureau is submitting an application to the State Water Resources Control Board to secure a permit for use of the Joint Point of Diversion from February through mid-April 2000. The anticipated quantity of additional pumping could be as much as 200,000 acre feet, resulting in a potential 10% increase in water deliveries to both urban and agricultural water users south of the Delta.

2. Ecosystem Restoration

(a) Conflict of Interest Policy

The Ecosystem Roundtable adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy for itself that prohibits Roundtable members or their organizations from competing for ecosystem restoration funds. A copy of the policy is attached.

(b) Expansion of the NCWA Land Acquisition Report

CALFED has committed to developing a comprehensive report on land acquisition and use that covers the CALFED geographic scope. This report will build on and refine the recent Northern California Water Association (NCWA) Land Acquisition Report. CALFED is taking the lead in developing the timeline, workplan, and budget and outreach strategy for this effort. The expansion efforts reviewed for this report will begin with the Delta, followed by the San Joaquin Valley, Bay Area and tributary Watersheds.

(c) ERP Environmental Water Program

CALFED will be contracting with Jones and Stokes Associates to work on the development of a framework for ERP environmental water acquisition. The scope of work for this task will include:

- Definition of the ERP water acquisition program
- Identification and summarizing ERP water needs included in the ERP.
- Development of draft criteria for ERP water acquisition
- Identification of potential third party impacts
- Identification of options for potential downstream uses of acquired water
- Define the relationship of ERP water acquisition with the Environmental Water Account
- Define the relationship and opportunities for synergy and conflict with other water acquisition programs
- Develop a plan for local involvement and public outreach

It is anticipated that sufficient progress will occur on this program such that CALFED can solicit for ERP water acquisitions as part of next year's solicitation, with a completed framework in place prior to approving ecosystem restoration expenditures.

(d) FY 2001 Project Selection Process

CALFED is currently recruiting scientists to serve on the ERP Science Board. The scientists are drawn largely from the ERP Strategic Plan Core Team and the 1997 ERP Science Review Panel. The Science Board will be working in December and January to develop the FY 2001 Implementation Plan. The Plan will be used as the basis for project solicitation and subsequent project selection. A public workshop will be held in February 2000 to discuss the FY 2001 Implementation Plan. The solicitation for FY 2001 projects is expected to begin in March and to close in May. Project selection is anticipated in October 2000.

(e) White Paper Development

ERP and CMARP staff are working together to address the scope of several white papers, and to tie the white paper effort to proposed CALFED actions. Topics identified for white paper development include the following:

- DEFT and the Environmental Water Account
- Open Water Processes
- Aquatic Toxicity
- Fluvial Geomorphic Restoration Opportunities
- Delta Smelt
- Splittail
- Salmonids Life History
- Delta Agricultural Diversions, including fish losses and current screening technology

Each of these white papers will address the following issues:

- Specific monitoring and research recommendations building from the conceptual framework and models described in the March 1999 CMARP report
- Information needed for developing indicators
- Information needed for developing a restoration habitat adaptive management

(f) Delta Protection Commission Consultation

As directed by the CALFED Policy Group, CALFED staff met with the Delta Protection Commission at their meeting on November 18th. The purpose of the meeting was to review the three Delta land acquisition projects proposed for CALFED funding in FY 2000. A memo summarizing the meeting is attached.

(g) ERP Focus Group

The Ecosystem Restoration Program has convened a small group of stakeholders and agency representatives to provide guidance on policy-related issues associated with the refinement and implementation of the ERP. The ERP Focus Group is concentrating on four categories of ERP issues:

- Program Integration: What are the conflicts and synergies between the ERP and other CALFED Programs (Levees, Water Quality, Watershed Management, etc.) and non-CALFED programs (CVPIA-AFRP, Comprehensive Study, Four Pumps, etc.). How can we facilitate development of a single blueprint for ecosystem restoration in the Bay-Delta system?
- ERP and Regulatory Compliance: How can regulatory compliance needed for program implementation be integrated with the ERP? Can the ERP serve as recovery plans, and what steps would need to be taken to make this happen? To what extent are the MSCS prescriptions more specific manifestations of ERP programmatic actions, and to what extent are they additive?
- Objective refinement/indicator development: Setting objectives is not a purely scientific endeavor; it also involves policy decisions. The Focus Group can help define a process for defining more detailed objectives, a process that is informed by science but that balance science and policy.
- Priority setting: What will be the criteria used to prioritize ERP actions and to ingrain adaptive management in implementation? How do we juggle scientific-oriented criteria (ecological benefit, information value) with policy-oriented criteria (public support, compliance ripeness)?

3. Comprehensive Monitoring Assessment and Research Program

(a) Baseline Status and Trends Monitoring Report

Work is continuing on development of a report recommending a baseline monitoring program. The report will discuss the value of the present monitoring network in meeting CALFED Stage 1 needs, and will provide recommendations where current activities are not adequate. The overall objective is to provide a background ecological monitoring program that will assess overall health of the system and, over time, trends in the system. A draft report should be completed by December 30, 1999.

(b) Science Conference

Randy Brown and Fred Nichols, with the assistance of a broad-based steering committee, have been leading the effort to organize a CALFED Science Conference scheduled for October 2000. The purpose of the conference is to bring together scientists and engineers to share information and recent findings on issues relevant to CALFED's goals and objectives in the Bay-Delta watershed. This conference could provide a forum for assessing progress to date in the Category III Program, facilitating prioritization of technical topics for funding purposes by focusing on what has been learned through previous and ongoing projects. The 3-day conference will be held at the Convention Center in Sacramento.

4. Water Transfers Program

(a) On-line Water Transfers Application Process

USBR and CALFED staff continue to meet to develop the start of an on-line water transfer application process. Work has included meeting with a web-site developer as well as hosting information gathering meetings with USBR and DWR staff responsible for water transfer approvals. CALFED is hoping for a June 2000 public release of the first phase of this web site.

(b) Transfers Clearinghouse

CALFED staff is working with CALFED agency representatives to initiate an effort to establish and fund a water transfer information clearinghouse (as described in the June 1999 Water Transfer Program Plan). This entity is focused on the sharing of knowledge and would have no regulatory or oversight functions. The web site discussed above would be administered by this entity.

5. Drinking Water Quality Program

(a) Delta Drinking Water Council

Issue papers are being prepared on the following subjects for discussion at the next Council meeting on December 16, 1999: treatment technologies, health effects research, regulatory developments, monitoring and assessment, water exchanges for drinking water quality, source control, storage and operations, and conveyance. Each issue paper will summarize current understanding, key issues, and potential areas of conflict and multiple benefit. The issue papers will provide a vehicle for Council members to discuss and develop recommendations related to CALFED's Drinking Water Quality Improvement Strategy.

(b) South Delta Early Implementation

CALFED's Drinking Water Constituents Workgroup, which met on November 18, is continuing to assist staff in developing a proposal for assessing sources and magnitudes of loading of drinking water constituents of concern. CALFED's Veale/Byron Tract Work Group is scheduled to meet on December 6. This workgroup is assisting staff in identifying feasible projects and studies for improving source water quality for CCWD's Rock Slough and Los Vaqueros intakes.

(c) Bay Area Regional Blending Assessment

As part of its Drinking Water Quality Improvement Strategy, CALFED will consider opportunities to engage in water exchanges to meet drinking water quality needs. On November 16, staff met with representatives from Bay Area urban water suppliers to develop a proposal for investigating the potential for regional water exchanges to improve source water quality. The initial phase of work would focus on two technical tasks:

- (1) quantitatively assess individual agency needs for higher quality source water; and
- (2) assess the ability of existing facilities to convey the needed quantities assuming the water is available. An additional phase identifying specific sources of higher quality supply would be undertaken if warranted by the results of the initial phase. This study would be conducted through a CALFED consultant, with policy and technical input provided through stakeholder committees.

6. Levees Program

(a) Levee System Integrity Program

The Seismic Vulnerability Sub-Team is finalizing the "Seismic Vulnerability of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Levees" report. A draft was first circulated in December 1998.

(b) Suisun Marsh Levee Investigation

At the request of the Policy Group in July 1998, CALFED included the Suisun Marsh in the Levee Program as an optional strategy to meet its primary objectives. An investigation was launched to determine how this optional strategy could be implemented. Preliminary results indicate significant water quality, water supply reliability, and ecosystem restoration benefits could be achieved through addition of actions in the Suisun Marsh. DWR has performed preliminary modeling to assess potential water quality benefits or impacts resulting from differing levee configurations, some of which would support ecosystem restoration goals. Higher dimensional modeling is currently underway to corroborate the results of the DWR modeling and will be completed in early November 1999.

The Suisun Marsh Levee Investigation Team will be producing an investigation summary by March 2000. It is anticipated that the report will reflect the latest discussions in the group and in the current outreach effort. The Suisun Resource Conservation District and some local landowners are Team members. Further stakeholder involvement will begin later this year with a local outreach meeting and will proceed through February 2000.

(c) North Delta Regional Plan

CALFED has begun planning for the implementation of the North Delta Regional Plan in Stage 1a. Its goal is to "provide a coordinated regional solution to ecosystem, watershed, water quality, water supply reliability, and flood control concerns in the Lower Sacramento River - North Delta Region." The FY 2000 Levee Program budget calls for initiation of a project-level EIS/R later this year. An important part of this Plan is to coordinate the actions of over 10 projects currently underway in the Region. The Mokelumne-Cosumnes Watershed Alliance, formed and supported by CALFED and members of the projects, is accomplishing this coordination. CALFED Category III funds are being used by some of these projects.

CALFED is also coordinating with the Delta Ad Hoc Recreation Committee to get Agency and stakeholder input on recreation concerns in the North Delta Region.

6. Water Use Efficiency

During November, the Water Use Efficiency (WUE) team has created a draft of approximately 250 region-specific agricultural Targeted Benefits. These Targeted Benefits represent specific objectives from the CALFED ERP, Water Quality, and Water Management plans and are the foundation of Quantifiable Objectives. A draft white paper on Ag WUE assurances was also drafted.

During the next month, the Ag Targeted Benefits will be firmed and prioritized through consults with scientists and water managers. The assurances framework will be refined. The Urban Certification and incentive programs will also continue to be refined.

7. Multiple Species Conservation Strategy

The MSCS team is continuing to refine the Endangered Species Act streamlining process by developing a "users' guide" for the Action Specific Implementation Plan. They have also been working with the Ecosystem Restoration Program staff to better integrate the two programs and address the perception that there is more than one ecosystem restoration program within CALFED. This perception has led some to think that the measures recommended in the MSCS to reach species conservation goals are in addition to the ERP, rather than inclusive of the ERP. There is still some discussion among the wildlife agencies as to the best way to integrate the two efforts on a timeline that will allow for timely completion of the necessary regulatory compliance documents for the final Record of Decision.

8. Watershed Program

The CALFED Watershed Program Work Group met on November 5th in Oakland. The meeting was dedicated to discussions with several representatives from Bay area environmental justice groups. Presentations were made by watershed and community-based organizations active in the North, East and South Bay, as well as San Francisco.

Discussions focused on opportunities for potential partnering between these local organizations and the CALFED Watershed Program. Arlene Wong of the Pacific Institute agreed to craft proposed language for a "Principles for participation" document to help the Watershed Program staff to assist local organizations with environmental justice issues.

9. Finalization of the EIS/R

Preparation of the final programmatic EIS/R is well underway. A draft "Response to Comments" document was provided to the CALFED agencies for review on November 24, 1999. A draft document containing changes to the various program plans and the impact analysis will be distributed to the CALFED agencies on December 10th. Both documents will be revised and then re-circulated for final review by the agencies.

The final Programmatic EIS/R is scheduled to be released to the public on April 7, 2000. The thirty-day waiting period will end May 8, 2000, and the Record of Decision and Certification are scheduled to be signed on June 30, 2000.

10. Water Management Strategy Support Studies

The following is a summary of current efforts underway to complete development of the Water Management Strategy Framework.

(a) Economic Evaluation of Water Management Alternatives

The screening report has been completed. A public workshop was held on the report on November 30th.

(b) Riverine Processes

This is a study of the time value of water in the Sacramento River basin, to help assess the impacts of any changes in diversions from the river. Draft conclusions of the white paper include a recommendation to preserve the existing duration and frequency of flows between 55,000 and 80,000 cfs in the Sacramento River at Chico Landing. The final white paper will be distributed for review on December 15, 1999.

(c) Hydroelectric Facilities Re-operation Investigation

The initial study has concluded. The draft report was presented in a public workshop on October 21, 1999, with the final report to be distributed for review on December 15, 1999.

(d) Groundwater Investigations

CALFED and DWR have developed a work plan to help identify the proper role of conjunctive use in a comprehensive Water Management Strategy, and to pursue feasibility evaluations of conjunctive use and groundwater banking opportunities. Grant applications will be issued by the end of 1999 for CALFED funding for technical assistance to locally sponsored conjunctive use pilot projects.

(e) North of Delta Offstream Storage Study

DWR is continuing work on its North of Delta Offstream Storage Study. Work anticipated during State fiscal year 1999-2000 will focus on the environmental issues associated with constructing potential offstream reservoirs, including:

- botanical, general vegetation and sensitive plants surveys
- wetlands delineations
- wildlife special status species inventories and
- avian fish amphibian and reptile surveys
- A progress report documenting findings of the investigation to date is being prepared and will be released to the public by February 2000.

(f) Onstream Storage Investigation

The USBR recently completed an assessment of the potential for enlarging Shasta Dam and Reservoir. Three enlargement options were evaluated that involved a structural raising of the crest height of Shasta Dam by 6.5, 102.5 and 202.5 feet. The Bureau concluded that the 6.5 foot raise would have the least unit cost, would minimize both environmental and socio-economic impacts, and would be the most viable project for further analysis in a feasibility-level investigation. Through the year 2000 the Bureau will initiate a program to collect environmental baseline data from habitat surveys.

Attachments